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# What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn Experience

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# **What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn Experience**

Peter Catapano

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New York City College of Technology

Brooklyn Aesthetic Conference, April 21, 2012

# Brooklyn Origins

- **Downtown Brooklyn entertainment and commercial district**
- **Popular theater before vaudeville**
- **Health and Safety concerns**
- **Brooklyn Theater fire**

# Gentility & the “new” Audience



What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn Experience

# The Rise of Vaudeville as a Business

- **Theater Circuits**
  - B.F. Keith and Tony Pastor
- **Booking Agents**
- **Performers**
  - Variety
  - Comedy
  - Minstrelsy

# Hyde and Behman

- Richard Hyde and Louis C. Behman
- Hyde and Behman's Theatre, 342 Adams St. between Fulton St. and Myrtle Ave.
- Other theaters
  - Grand Opera House, 14 Elm Place, near Fulton St.
  - The Gayety, 18-22 Throop Ave, Williamsburg
  - The Star, 389 Jay St. at Fulton St.
  - The Bijou Theater, 26 Smith Street at Livingston

# Percy Williams

- The Orpheum, 578 Fulton St. at Flatbush Ave.
- Other Theaters
  - Brooklyn Music Hall, 2560 Fulton St. and Broadway, E. New York
  - Novelty, 780 Driggs Ave and S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. Williamsburg



THE ORPHEUM THEATRE

This fine theatre building is located at the corner of Fulton Street and Rockwell Place. It is the leading house devoted to vaudeville in the city of Brooklyn. The building is a handsome structure without, and the auditorium within is acknowledged to be unsurpassed for stage area and elegant appointments, by any of the great vaudeville theatres of the country.

## The Orpheum Theater

What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn  
Experience



# ORPHEUM

MATINEE EVERY DAY.

OPENS FOR THE SEASON

MONDAY MATINEE, SEPT. 2.

GREAT OPENING BILL!

6 European Novelty Acts.

5 Big American Acts.

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 1  
**BEDINI & ARTHUR,**  
FROM THE EMPIRE, LONDON

**HAINES & VIDOCQ,**  
AMERICAN LAUGH PRODUCERS

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 2  
**STUART,**  
The Male Fall. After Two Year's Phenomenal Success Abroad

**LAURA BENNETT & SALLIE STEMBLER**

IN GEO. COHN'S LATEST SKETCH, "SAPHO AND LULU"

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 3  
**COLEMAN'S DOGS & CATS**

A GREAT ANIMAL ACT, FROM THE WINTER GARDEN, BERLIN

**JOHN & BERTHA GLEESON,**

AMERICA'S NEATEST SONG AND DANCE ACT

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 4  
**KARSEY'S MYROPHONE.**

A NEW AND SPLENDID MUSICAL ACT

**TORCAT,**

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 5. ALL SUMMER AT N. Y. THEATRE ROOF

EUROPEAN NOVELTY NO. 6  
**ZAZELLE & VERNON**

COMEDY PAR PERFORMERS, FROM THE CONTINENTAL MUSIC HALL.

**ANCIENT ROME,**

Interesting and Instructive Moving Pictures by the Vitagraph

EXTRA FEATURE! THE ALWAYS WELCOME EXTRA FEATURE!  
**BARROWS-LANCASTER**  
**COMPANY**

PRESENTING "TACTIC" THE BEST SKETCH IN VAUDEVILLE

**NEXT WEEK—THE GREAT SVENGALI'S.**

*Brooklyn Eagle, Sept. 1, 1901*

What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn  
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# Hyde and Behman

**GAYETY**  
THEATER  
Matinee Every Day.  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 1902.

ALBERT **BELLMAN** & **MOORE** LOTTIE  
In Their Little Skit, "Hester's Promise."

**JACK NORWORTH**  
AMERICA'S FAVORITE ENTERTAINER.  
**BUOMAN & ADELLE**  
In Their New Act "The Latch Key."  
**CLIPPER QUARTETTE**  
In Scenes in the Sunny South.  
**CHARLES B. WARD**  
Original of Costermongers.  
**RICE AND CADY**  
German Comedians.  
**BARR AND EVANS**  
Comedians and Entertainers.  
**THE TOSSING AUSTINS**  
Artistic Globe and Club Swingers.  
**THE GREAT THURMAN**  
Card Manipulator.  
**DILLON AND WARD**  
Acrobats Supreme.

**GRAND CONCERT THIS SUNDAY NIGHT**  
**10-STAR ACTS—10**  
POPULAR PRICES, 12c, 25c, and 50c.

**GRAND OPERA HOUSE.**  
REGULAR MATINEES,  
WED.—SAT.

REGULAR SEASON BEGINS AT SPECIAL MATINEE **To-morrow (LABOR DAY)**

**TRIUMPHANT RETURN,**  
AFTER A SUCCESSFUL TOUR OF SIX YEARS, PLAYING ALL THE PRINCIPAL CITIES OF EUROPE.

**CHARLES McCARTHY**  
IN HIS ORIGINAL ROLE OF LARRY HOWARD

**IN One of the Bravest.**

The first American play on the stage, portraying the life of a New York fireman, supported by the quaint Irish comedian.

**WILLIAM CRONIN as MRS. GROGAN**  
And carefully selected company of recognized reputation. Produced at enormous expense. Popular with the masses. The most entertaining ensemble of amusing specialties in any modern play.

**THE MOST REALISTIC FIRE SCENE EVER PRESENTED.**  
Introducing Steam Engines, Horse Carriage, Arabian Horses, Lion Lines, Nets, Scaling Ladders and Other Devices for Saving Life and Property as Used by the

**NEW YORK FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

NEXT ATTRACTION: **"THE TELEPHONE GIRL,"** New Company, Costumes and Appearances.

# Bijou Theater

**BIJOU THEATER,**  
**BROOKLYN.**  
**MATINEES DAILY.**  
 COMMENCING TO-MORROW (MONDAY), MAT.  
 NIGHT ENTIRE Lower Floor Res., 25 & 50c.  
 PRICES. ENTIRE Balcony—Res., 25 & 50c.  
 Gallery—15c.

And the High Standard of Attractions Continues.  
 Sumptuous Revival of Bartley Campbell's Picturesque Southern Idyl,

**THE WHITE SLAVE.**

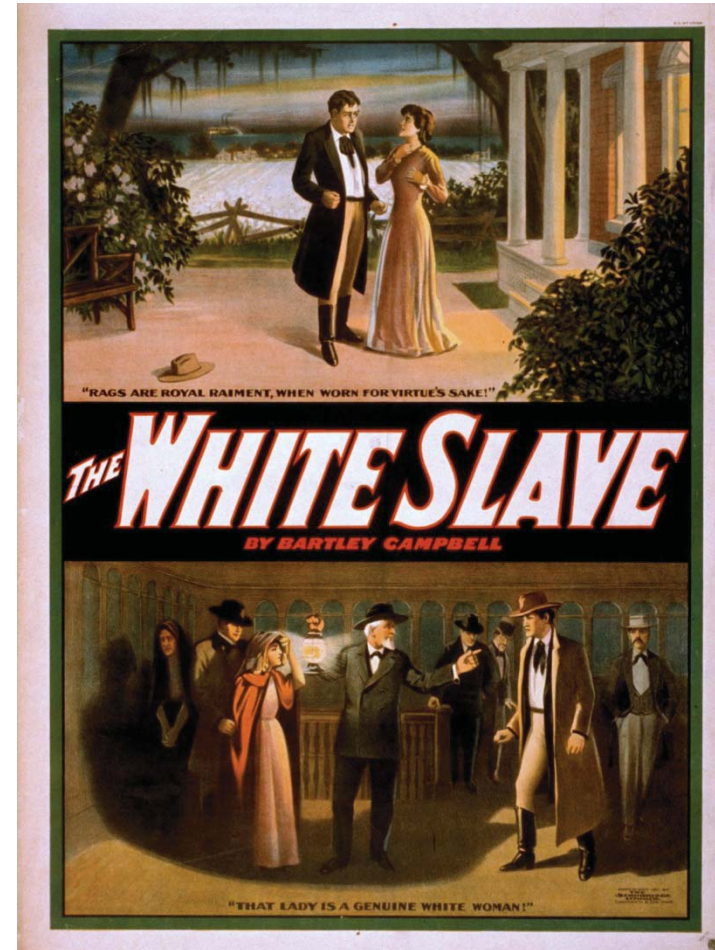
EVERYTHING NEW EXCEPT THE PLAY.

"Rags Are Royal Raiment When Worn for Virtue's Sake."

Plantation Darkies.  
 Unique Specialties.  
 Rainstorm of Real Water.

THE PHENOMENAL CAST INCLUDES LILLIE THURLOW, Who Appeared as "Mercia" in "The Sign of the Cross." Late Leading Support to James A. Herne.  
 DAVID MURRAY,  
 BARGAIN MATINEE DAILY. ENTIRE LOWER FLOOR & BALCONY 25c.  
 EVERY SEAT RESERVED.

Next Attraction, Commencing at Matinee, MONDAY, September 9,  
**THE FATAL WEDDING.**



What is Vaudeville? The Brooklyn Experience

# Consolidation and Conclusions

- **Brooklyn with New York (1898)**
- **“The Combine”**
  - End of the Independents
  - Eventually absorption of the Hyde & Behman and Percy Williams
- **Popular Theater as National Culture**

# Bert Williams and George Walker

**BRIGHTON BEACH**

Wm. T. Grover, **MUSIC HALL.** Manager.

<b>SEATS,</b> 25c.	Reserved Orchestra Seats, 10c. Extra.	<b>CHILDREN AT</b> <b>MATINEE,</b> 10c.
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EVERY AFTERNOON AT 2. **TO-DAY** AND **TO-NIGHT** MONROE, MACK & LAWRENCE, JULIA KINGSLEY, SYDNEY GRANT, ELAHEITA, LOUIS BREHANT, ANDALUSIANS. VITAGRAPH, SLAFER'S BROOKLYN MARINE BAND.

**EVERY EVENING AT 8. TO-MORROW AND ALL WEEK.** NOTE—In consequence of the extreme length of the programme the performance commences at 8 sharp.

**GREATEST SEASIDE VAUDEVILLE IN AMERICA.**

**SISTERS HAWTHORNE**  
Presenting the Delmy Japanese Romance,  
**THE WILLOW PATTERN PLAY,**  
By Leslie Stuart, Author of "Turkies."

**MAY EDQUIN & FRED EDWARDS** LATE OF THE FLORENDA CO. In the Delightful Comedy with Music,  
**ALL IN THE FAMILY.**

**HAL STEPHENS** Imitations of Celebrated Actors, with Scenic and Electrical Effects.

**EXTRA FEATURE. THE RULER OF NEW YORK. EXTRA FEATURE.**  
**JOHN W. RANSOME** AS **THE HON. RICHARD CROKER.**

**ZELMA RAWLSTON** In Music Character and Changes. **VIRA RIAL** SONGS OF THE DAY.

**QUAKER CITY QUARTETTE** In the Unconventionally Funny Sketch, "PUN IN THE BARBER SHOP."

**AMERICAN VITAGRAPH** THE MOVING OF ALL THE FATHERS AT THE BEACH, SUN-DAY, AUG. 25, AND OTHER VIEWS. **THE ROYAL JAPS** IS MARVELOUS MAGIC.

**LEONARD GROVER, Jr., AND CO.** In His Immensely Funny Sketch,  
**WANTED SOME LADIES.**

— AND THE EVER POPULAR  
**SLAFER'S BROOKLYN MARINE BAND.**

**SPECIAL FEATURE.**  
FIRST APPEARANCE AT THIS THEATER OF  
**WILLIAMS & WALKER,**  
THE SONS OF HAIL.

EVERY AFTERNOON AND EVENING.



Photograph of Bert Williams and George Walker, reproduced in James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan*